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LETTER DATED 19 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you the text of the statement made by Mr. Léonce Ngendakumana, President of the National Assembly of Burundi, before the Security Council at its meeting held under the Arria formula on 12 January 1999.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Gamaliel NDARUZANIYE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Statement made by the President of the National Assembly of Burundi before the Security Council on 12 January 1999

On behalf of the National Assembly of Burundi and on my own behalf, allow me first of all to convey to you best wishes for 1999. May this year bring the best prospects for peace and development for all mankind. I should also like to thank you for affording us this wonderful opportunity to address the Security Council in these early days of 1999, which has been designated a year of hope by the vast majority of Burundians.

Beleaguered by a conflict that is over 30 years old and by an unprecedented crisis dating back to October 1993, Burundi has been the scene of atrocities for the past few years: large-scale massacres motivated by political and ethnic factors, the devastation of the economy, the destruction of all the State's infrastructure, uncontrolled population movements to and from Burundi, the birth of new phenomena such as camps for displaced and regrouped persons, the formation of armed groups, as well as other atrocities which I refrain from describing here.

Several attempts have been made to settle the conflict in Burundi. In recent times, armed confrontation has been tried. Nevertheless, all attempts at a settlement have failed because Burundians have not yet had the courage to get together and face the truth about the management of their country's future, people, and economic and social development.

Today the moment of truth has arrived. For the first time since the crisis of October 1993, we Burundians are beginning a new year with a clear political vision of our country's political, institutional and socio-economic future.

Recognizing the many roadblocks faced by Burundi since October 1993, mindful of the supremacy of the interests of the nation as a whole over sectarian and selfish interests, convinced that the logic of confrontation, demonization and globalization can only lead to the disintegration and disappearance of the nation, anxious to foster a State based on law and democracy, we Burundians have decided to subscribe to the principle of comprehensive political negotiations as the only means of producing an effective and lasting settlement of the conflicts.

It is in that context that the authorities in power since 25 July 1996 and the National Assembly constituted after the elections of June 1993 have opted for national rebirth, irrespective of their institutional origins, and have undertaken to settle the Burundian conflict by establishing a vast movement for peace, democracy and development. Accordingly, a comprehensive peace process has been designed on two complementary fronts: one internal, the other external.

On the internal front, the national debate has resulted in a domestic political partnership for peace, which involves the National Transition Assembly and the Government, jointly and actively, in the process of national

reconstruction. This partnership took concrete shape with the agreement on the political platform of the transition regime, signed on 6 June 1998, and the Constitutional Act of Transition, issued on that day.

The political platform sets forth general guidelines on matters fundamental to Burundians, such as democracy, human rights, peace and security for all, justice, genocide, economic revival and the reconstruction of Burundi. The Constitutional Act organizes the institutions.

On the external front, comprehensive peace negotiations open to all the political protagonists, including the armed groups, began on 15 June 1998 in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, under the auspices of President Julius Nyerere. The negotiations are proceeding smoothly.

Today the people of Burundi, the Facilitator of the negotiations on the conflict in Burundi and the international community welcome the fact that the comprehensive peace process in Burundi has been launched definitively and that hopeful signs are visible.

As far as we are concerned, this favourable assessment of the ongoing peace process in Burundi must be accompanied by concrete measures to relieve the suffering of the Burundian people. The political initiatives and efforts will fall short of expectations unless there is effective support from the international community to redress the socio-economic situation and reconstruct the country.

The economic and social indicators amply demonstrate the wretched conditions being endured by the Burundian people because of the crisis and its many repercussions. This suffering and impoverishment of our people cannot be allowed to continue much longer. That is why we are calling on the friends of Burundi and on the entire international community to mobilize and provide a minimum standard of well-being for the many people in Burundi now living below the poverty line.

We again appeal earnestly to the international community to support the comprehensive peace process in Burundi by doing everything within its power to ensure that:

(a) War and violence in Burundi cease;

(b) The economic sanctions imposed on Burundi on 31 July 1996 are lifted;

(c) Bilateral and multilateral cooperation is resumed so that external financing is also resumed.

That would enable us to engage in genuine comprehensive negotiations on designing a society safe and secure for all, to rehabilitate the victims of the tragedies in our history, to revive the nation's economy, and to reconstruct the country and preserve it from the risk of further destruction tomorrow.

The Government of Burundi and the National Transition Assembly call on all their partners to take account of our firm commitment to pursue to the end the peaceful settlement of the Burundian conflict through political negotiations.

In closing, I should like to thank you once again for your kind attention to our urgent appeal. The people of Burundi look forward to your invaluable contribution in helping them to pursue the peace process and overcome all the obstacles standing in the way of that process, particularly the economic blockade against Burundi and the freezing of cooperation.